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BULLETIN OF THE
**NORTHERN ILLINOIS
STATE NORMAL
SCHOOL**

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DE KALB, ILLINOIS

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

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Series II.

MAY, 1905

No. 4.

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"I know that he who walks in the way these following ballads point, will be manful in necessary fight, fair in trade, loyal in love, generous to the poor, tender in the household, prudent in living, plain in speech, merry upon occasion, simple in behavior and honest in all things." SIDNEY LANIER, Introduction to "The Boy's Percy."

"A somewhat distinct group of the best reading for fourth and fifth grades is found in the historical ballads and national legends from the early history of England, Germany, Italy and France. The old historical ballads and traditions have great educative value. They are simple, crude, and powerful, and awaken the spirit to receive the message of heroism."—CHARLES A. McMURRY, "Special Method in the Reading of English Classics."

"We ought to draw more freely than we do on ballad literature and the great stores of the world's epics. Not only do we fail to draw upon plentiful modern balladry, but we make all too little use of the anonymous folk-balladry that has been available since Child and others mined in this rich quarry."—PERCIVAL CHUBB, "Teaching of English in the Elementary and the Secondary School."

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THE OLD BALLADS AS LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN.

BY IDA S. SIMONSON.

It is a commonplace that children live over the life of the race, that they begin to know the world much as did their primitive ancestors. When they break the bonds of convention, very naturally we call them young savages. There is in the child the wonder for the nature world that belongs to the time of myth. He has a tendency to make personal, things of the objective world of reality. He is in no way introspective unless he be the little prig, the unnatural child. He is concerned with doing, as were the hunters and warriors of the days of legend. Like them, he dreams of combats and of rare discoveries. As he goes through the wood, he delights in making believe that he is the first to break the path. He follows a quest for hidden treasure. The shadow is alluring for the fascinating terrors it holds. Places are still haunted by wild animals and by the mysteries of the dark and the unknown that belonged to the race in its childhood. In this primitive child world anything can happen. It is the wonderland in which fairies and goblins and all other incongruities may dwell as a matter of course.

As the child knows more and more of the real world, his interest in the impossible things of the wonderland of faery diminishes and he demands things connected with the real world. By the time he is in the fourth or fifth grades, he is much alive to realities, especially realities of action. Above all, he likes the good fight. It is the time of the dog fight in the back yard, the games of contest at school, and the poring over stories of adventure. But the hero that he loves is still, in essence, the hero of

the old myth and the fairy tale. It is now Jack the Giant Killer in another form—Siegfried slaying the dragon, Hiawatha fighting with Mudjekeewis or destroying the great fish, Lancelot riding down ten knights at a tournament, or Daniel Boone following the stolen girls or escaping from the Indians. Whatever the boy of this age may think of the Sunday School and the golden text, he will give willing attention to the story of David and Goliath and will listen again and again to the teacher's reading,—“And David put his hand in his bag and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into the forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.” And this he likes because it is the story of a fight between a little fellow and a big one, between a warrior who was “but a youth and ruddy, and of a fair countenance” and a giant champion “whose height was six cubits and a span.” The boy who revels in these tales has become a hero-worshipper, as mankind has long been at bottom; and the hero for him, as for the race, is the good fighter—physical before spiritual. That this is a fundamental human instinct, witness the amount of the world's great literature that has this old theme of interest. And how far is it from Hercules or Beowulf to Lancelot and Arthur, to Bunyan's Christian or Jean Valjean?

From just such feelings and such experiences the old ballads have come. They seem to express the boyhood of the race. They come from a time when men felt and acted—lived—more than they meditated. To enter their world, we must get far away from our modern sense of individualism, our self-consciousness in art, to that golden, misty time before ever there was printer's ink, before the oldest critic was born, before the maker of a poem added his name to his thought, to a spoken, floating literature,—a literature of song, not a literature of books and printer's ink. We must go back to the company that gathered on the village green and danced a gay dance at a wedding, chanted the dirge of a funeral, or rejoiced with victorious heroes, singing songs that came from no one knew where, from no one knew whom,—and no one asked—that just “came to be” when, in Herder's phrase, “heroic traditions of themselves took on poetic form.” However these

ballads were made, whatever may have been the part of the single minstrel or of the community in their making, they seem to look back to a democratic origin and to a free, democratic life. Human hearted they are, as songs of the singer to-day cannot be—race-hearted, and so we call them folk songs.

Since this ballad literature comes from the fresh morning world of the race, since the tales it tells are tales of youth and freedom and daring, tales that seem to 'tell themselves,' spontaneously and buoyantly, it is from its very nature, literature for youth. Into this world the boy and girl may enter—it is their world. One thinks of Sir Walter Scott, learning by heart before he could read, the ballad of "Hardyknute," and loudly repeating it about the house with such martial spirit that the worthy clergyman of the parish was driven to exclaim, "One may as well speak in the mouth of a cannon as where that child is." What luck it was for the boy when he came upon a copy of Percy's "Reliques," the first published collection of the old English and Scottish ballads. Of the joy of that event he wrote: "The summer day sped onward so fast, that notwithstanding the sharp appetite of thirteen, I forgot the hour of dinner and was sought for with anxiety, and was still found entranced in my intellectual banquet. To read and to remember was in this instance the same thing, and henceforth I overwhelmed my school-fellows, and all who would hearken to me, with tragical recitations from the ballads of Bishop Percy." As one reads his "Border Minstrelsy," one feels the charm at work, the motive force, from which came the romances of his maturity. How much of his love for the heather, of his passion for Scotland, of his knowledge of human motive, of his power as a world story-teller, did he owe to these 'old wives' tales?

This interest in the old ballads is largely an interest in story. Long ago children taught us that the literature for them must be story literature. In this, too, it is the history of the race repeating itself. On the walls of the Library of Congress is pictured a scene in the desert,—Arabs sitting on the sands, looking with eager, intent gaze upon the face of the man who stands before them with arm outstretched. The faces tell you, the attitude of the one

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who is speaking tells you, that it is a good story those men of the desert are listening to, that the outstretched arm is pointing to the land of fancy, where Moorish castles rise, where dwell the genii of the lamp and the fair princess in her garden of roses, and where brave men meet brave men in clash of battle. The story of that picture is not only the story of the Arab; it is the story of the Greek as well, of the Frank and the German and the Anglo-Saxon. It is what happens again for every child at bed-time, pleading, "One story more." The little boy listening wide-eyed to Uncle Remus is tasting the world-old delight of the race. And the kind of story he demands is the kind of story that the race demanded in its youth. Then a story meant a story: things happened in it; there was little description, no philosophizing and no moralizing. It was pure narration. "Mother Goose" is still the classic for children because it is a wonderful collection of stories that are really stories,—whimsical, full of incongruities, but also full of action. Fairy tales are fascinating to childhood because they are concerned above all with telling a good story.

These old ballads came from a camp-fire life, and it was their business to tell a story, a good story, and not be long a-doing it. In them things happen and keep happening; there is no needless description, no moralizing reflection. The hero goes forth to battle and he fights a good fight with manly courage. It is a spring morning and Robin Hood goes carolling along the highway in quest of adventure—and he has it, a merry, exciting one, and returns in high spirits to the banquet of venison beneath the greenwood tree. True Thomas lies down for a quiet nap upon Huntlie bank, when whisk! he is in fairy land with the Queen of Faery and in a trice, again he is on Huntlie bank and seven long years have passed away. Professor Newcomer tells of a story that thrilled him, when a boy, with its beginning, "A fight! a fight!" The ballads begin thus, in the midst of things, and straightway things are happening and keep on happening; from the beginning to the end, there is always 'something doing,' and the ballad ends when the deeds are done, when the tale is told.

Ballad literature deals with the old material for story,—that always has been and always will be the material for story, in what-

ever form it appear—combat, romance, adventure. In this study of the ballads as literature for children, we are concerned mainly with what are known as the heroic ballads and the ballads of adventure, such as the cycle of Robin Hood ballads. The old heroic ballads are in praise of the good fight and the good fighter. One thinks of Sir Andrew Barton keeping up his gallant sea-fight to the end, or of Johnny Armstrong, wounded to the death, but shouting out his thrilling battle-cry,—

“Fight on, my merry men all,
I am a little wounded but am not slain;
I will lay me down to bleed a while,
Then I'll rise and fight with you again.”

And of these ballads of combat, chief for its resounding martial clangor, is “Chevy Chace,” the famous old ballad that tells of the hunting in the Cheviot Hills and the battle that followed, showing the marvelous fighting and the marvelous chivalry of both the Scottish Douglas and the English Percy. What wonder that the harpers sang it far and wide. Through it all, there is the flash of swords, the clash of armor, the hot-drawn breath, the lusty triumph. In time of peace it is still good to read a bold old fighting ballad and be spurred to new endeavor. Better is it, to read in one's youth when every impulse calls to action. For the boy and girl there is likewise need of the good fight and the true fighting spirit. These martial ballads breathe the spirit of fearless independence which has made England a world empire, which has made her colony her sister nation. If we call the Greek hero tale literature for modern childhood, even so may we these sturdily English, old fighting lays.

The ballad hero has something besides physical courage. He is a manly hero and plays a manful part. He obeys the command of his king though it send him to his doom. Is there a figure in English legend more loyally heroic than Sir Patrick Spence in the ‘grand old ballad?’ He waits not for fair weather, but at the word of his chieftain sets out on the dangerous voyage.

“Mak' hast', mak' hast', my merry men all,
Our guid ship sails the morn.”

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And tragical become his loyalty and heroism as we read the last stanza :

“Half o’er, half o’er to Aberdour,
It’s fifty fathoms deep,
And there lies guid Sir Patrick Spence
Wi’ the Scots lords at his feet.”

A stouter hearted figure is good Sir Patrick than the prince of the old fairy tale. The boy who quickens to this ballad must have somewhat within him to make him loyal and courageous though he never sail the seas at a king’s behest.

In the “Evolution of the Gentleman” Samuel Crothers says of ballads and romances: “They are in praise of force but it is a noble force. There is something better, they say, than brute force: It is manly force. The giant is no match for the gentleman.” As the hero is heroic and manly, so he is the chivalrous hero, though he be the bold outlaw. No doubt this is one reason why the name and fame of the blameless King Arthur, ‘cling to all high places like a golden cloud forever;’ also a reason why in the lowly places of England has long lingered the memory of the traditionary, rollicking hero of Sherwood Forest. Robin Hood is an outlaw, but he never molests the poor man who goes through the forest, or woman, or man in woman’s company. He meets a ‘silly old woman’ weeping along the highway and straightway he hies himself to Nottingham town to outwit the surly Sheriff. At a loud blast from his little bugle horn, ‘a hundred and fifty of Robin’s men come riding over the hill,’ and the widow’s three sons, to be hanged that day, are set at liberty and range the wild-wood with him. Again, in the ballad that tells of Robin Hood’s death and burial, we find him protecting the woman who is the cause of his death and refusing to Little John the boon of vengeance :

“I never hurt fair maid in all my time,
Nor at my end shall it be;
But give me my bent bow in my hand,
And a broad arrow I’ll let flee;
And where this arrow is taken up,
There shall my grave digged be.

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Lay me a green sod under my head,
And another under my feet;
And lay my bent bow by my side,
Which was my music sweet."

Robin Hood does knightly service in his own loyal-hearted way, and seems to have a better time about it, and to have more joy in living than the majority of those valiant old knights whose swords are rust. And when it comes to dying, he is still the equal of the gentleman knight. It is his joyous, knightly spirit, as well as his bold daring, that makes him a hearty good comrade for youth.

The longing for ideal justice is instinctive. We want the good to be rewarded and the bad punished. Often enough we put down a modern realistic novel unhappy that the good go unrewarded and the wicked still flourish like the green bay tree. They may do so in life, but we resent their doing so in story. A teacher was telling a primary class the story of Minnehaha. First came the talk with old Nokomis and then Hiawatha's journey through the wilderness, which, though 'at each stride a mile he measured,' was all too long for a little wisp of a girl in the class who exclaimed in happy anxiety, "Oh! I hope he'll get her." In a story we always want him to 'get her,' though it is all the better if he go through flood and flame and hew down giants in his path—so only that in the end he 'get her,' We want our hero to come out on top. He may be overpowered by overwhelming odds in the physical combat, but his spirit must be triumphant—if he die in battle he must die gloriously. Evidently the makers of these old ballads thought the same. Sir Patrick Spence goes to his doom, but he goes as a brave man should; he dies for his king and he dies a hero. Who can sorrow for Johnny Armstrong after that ringing battle-cry? One of the charms of the Robin Hood ballads especially, for children and for older readers, is that after struggle, roguish mischief, and narrow escape, Robin Hood sees that punishment goes where it is meet, that the poor go home with happy hearts and smiling faces and full pockets, as in the "Little Gest of Robin Hood." The rich robes and the good red gold that he takes from the rich and the powerful, he gives back to the poor and oppressed to whom the treasure justly belongs. Thus the poor widows know

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him and bless him, and Sherwood Forest, reserved by Norman conquerers for royal pleasure that deprives the people of bread, becomes a refuge for the oppressed, a place of freedom. So it is that the common folk in the ballads, and likewise we who read, laugh right heartily when bold Robin or Little John outwits the sour Sheriff of Nottingham and rejoice to hear the blast of Robin's bugle in time of need and to see his archers in Lincoln green come riding over the plain. And children share this feeling. For them, too, Robin is not only an arch hero of mischief; he is also the incarnation of justice,—the one who makes things come out right, as the godmother did in the old fairy story.

The life the ballads tell of is the plain, elemental life out-of-doors. They rejoice in a simple nature world. With them

“The merriest month in all the year
Is the merry month of May.”

And this merry month seems to last the greater part of the year, though sometimes skies grow dark and ‘gurly grows the sea,’ and a raven croaks forebodingly. There is something of Burns’s attitude, seeing in nature the reflex of his own emotion. But there is no philosophizing about nature. One is reminded rather of the bright nature world of Chaucer, with his joy in the blue sky and the ‘briddes’ song. As the ballads seem to have been made, not in the library, but in the sunshine and in the open air, they breathe, for the most part, delight in the good earth world. In the opening lines of the ballad of “Robin Hood and the Monk” we feel at once this joy in the simple, free life out of doors:

“In somer, when the shawes* be sheen,**
And leaves be large and long,
It is full merry in faire foreste
To hear the fowles song:

To see the deer draw to the dale,
And leave the hilles hee,
And shadow them in the leaves green
Under the greenwood tree.”

* woods ** beautiful

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It is the unconsciousness of the joy of these breezy out-door strains that gives them their charm and their power. A wholesome world is this for the boy or girl to live in. Some of our schools celebrate May Day, and the old custom of the May pole dance is being revived. Why not revive with it the ballad stories of Robin Hood and sometimes sing the songs the young folk of England sang on the village green in honor of the May? This unthinking, exulting joy in sunshine and blue sky and green forest glades is the best sort of experience for him who is later to learn the secrets of nature through the sciences and to enter into her mysteries with the great master poets and the philosophers of all time.

Close as this ballad literature is to the world of pleasant reality, it borders, too, upon the world of the unreal,—a world that has charm and terror for the child in story as it had for the child man in the youth of the race. The touch of the supernatural in the ballads allies them on the one hand with the primitive myth and the fairy tale, and on the other, with the literature of the great mysteries still about us. True Thomas receives his gift of song from the Queen of Faery, and with it the power of prophecy—‘the fairy tongue that could na’ lee.’ In the old tale we see a new significance when we read the modern version which Kipling makes in his ballad, “The Last Rhyme of True Thomas,” giving to the poet the office of truth-teller who receives his power from no earthly source and whose power passes that of the proud king who would loftily dub him a belted knight. The ballads carry on the literature of fable and we have talking birds and animals, with what they say and do always in intimate relation to human life. The old mysteries have been scientifically explained so that the old terrors are clear as daylight; yet there is something so haunting about the mysteries in these weird tales, that they seem in the shadow still. A child’s relish of ghost stories and quiet acceptance of unexplained wonders, his revel in what to older folk is supernatural nonsense, suggest that even the grewsome ballads of mystery may be a joy to him.

Yet there are more wholesome sources for his joy than the gloomy supernatural ballads or the tragical ballads of heroic tra-

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dition. We generally think of the humor of the ballads as grim, but there is gay humor in such a ballad as "King John and the Abbot of Canterbury" and in the Robin Hood ballads. Robin's adventures are merry adventures, though his merriment usually serves a good purpose; and they are always quick witted adventures. Even in danger, when he is at his wit's end, he keeps up his jovial spirit. He is a fun loving rogue, enjoying the zest of the fun though the joke be on himself and he is dripping wet from a struggle with the jolly friar in the 'middle streame,' or sore from a stout bout with Little John or a sound cudgel beating from the brawny tanner. Loud laughter rings through the forest, with many a light hearted song and strain of sweet music from the harp of Allin a Dale. The merry band dwell together in rare good comradeship, ideally loyal to their leader and to each other in their free greenwood life. And with the frolicksomeness of their adventures one gets the sunny background of merry England—Sherwood Forest, the king's highway, the English fields and hedgerows, and the blue sky bright over all.

The literature that makes the best appeal to the imagination, that most stimulates it, is not the literature that tells exactly how things look or how things happen,—that is done in detail. A class were talking about "Sir Patrick Spence" and one girl said, "I like it for what isn't in it." This it is that gives ballad literature its charm, that makes it literature—its suggestiveness.

"The king sits in Dumferling toun,
Drinking the blude-red wine"

Before us is the king's hall; there is the long table and about it gallant knights are feasting. The king is there in his royal robes and the queen sits in graciousness beside him. The feasting is high and the king is in merry mood as he holds up his goblet of 'blude-red wine' and asks the fatal question,

"O whar shall I get a guid sailor
To sail this ship of mine?"

Then how much of gayety, color, and gold lace, of pride and aris-

tocracy and terror, with the sea high and dark about, is suggested in the grimly humorous, ironical lines,—

“O our Scots nobles were richt laith
To weet their cork-heeled shoon;
But lang or a’ the play was played,
Their hats they swam aboon.”

Each one who reads makes his own picture and fills in the story for himself, all from the simple, suggestive lines. Much of our joy in literature comes from this suggestive character, and children are as glad as we to read between the lines and to imaginatively live the story. Miss Repplier, in one of her essays, tells of a little eight-year-old girl of her acquaintance who was reciting “Lord Ullin’s Daughter” and stopped short at the lines,

‘Adown the glen rode armed men,
Their trampling sounded nearer,’

and called out excitedly, “Don’t you hear the horses?” In this quality of suggestiveness there is nothing like these old ballads. This is something the child does not always get from the literature that is given him. Fairy stories are more prodigal; the Arabian tales remind one of arabesque decoration; “Hiawatha” is rich in detail; “Robinson Crusoe” is almost as definite as if it had been written for a modern journal of science. Even the Homeric stories, with their classic simplicity, do not depend more on mere outline, on words and phrases that suggest whole pages, than do these baldly simple old ballads. No danger with these stories, in the hands of a good teacher, of overfeeding the imagination of the child. They suggest and stimulate and the child’s imagination must do the rest.

The suggestiveness of the ballads comes largely from the fact that they are full of pictures that are always simple and vivid. We say of the “Rime of the Ancient Mariner”—the most successful of ballad imitations—that it is all picture. The mere naming of the poem calls up at once before us the terror stricken wedding-guest, the graybeard mariner with his skinny hand and glassy eye, the bride, red as a rose, the hot and copper sky, the sea serpents with their beautiful glossy coats, the phantom ship—but one must

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give the whole poem to give the pictures. In the old ballads the pictures flash before the reader in a more naïve and vivid way than in even this famous ballad of later time. Spontaneously and naturally will the child see these pictures and enjoy them—sooner, indeed, than the older reader, whose imaging sense may have become dulled. A story that is told by pictures,—pictures that are suggested in vivid outlines, is surely, if the story be wholesome, a story for the child with his fresh power of ‘seeing things.’

One hardly thinks of these simple stories as literature: they seem so nearly people and so little poetry. In the range of English literature, is there any poetry that seems so buoyantly to sing itself as this free old ballad poetry? There is something in it that tells us that it never came with labored effort, but literally out of the joy of the making,—that it came of itself. This spontaneous, unconscious freedom makes it preeminently poetry for children. Simple and childlike as it is, it is not trivial, for there is worthy matter. In its simple character men and women find refreshment; in this, too, may childhood find a fresh delight.

In their verse form, as in their manner and subject matter, the ballads have the simplicity of elemental life. The rhythm is insistent, something as in “Mother Goose.” It is the rhythm of primitive poetry, the rhythm which comes from the close contact of men with nature, the rhythm with which the story seems to flow along most easily. Children are so conscious of rhythm, that poetry which has this simple, apparent rhythm, appeals to them merely from the flow of the lines. One of the charms of “Hiawatha” for children is its easy, running metre. The rhythm of the ballads is of the kind to go dancing through one’s head even after one has forgotten the words. There is fascination in the movement of the lines as there is in gently flowing water, in the rocking of a cradle, in the singing of the wind. It is the rhythm of children’s games; naturally so, since the ballads grew out of rustic festivals and May-time merry-makings. Then, too, they came when poetry had the accompaniment of the dance, so we are very conscious of the accents in the lines. Ballad poetry is literally singing poetry. Its songlike character is apparent in the lilt of the verse, the musical rhymes, and the fre-

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quent repetitions and refrains, such as the merry and meaningless

“With a link, a down, and a day,”

the joyous nature refrain,

“And the birk and the broom blooms bonnie,”

or the inevitable

“They had na’ gone a league, a league,
A league but barely three.”

It is not long since we found out the value of dramatization in the teaching of literature to children,—of giving the child a chance to live in the story by letting him be the hero and live the hero’s life in play. Thus in the schoolroom, Siegfried fights with the great green dragon and overcomes him. What matter if his sword is but the ruler, if the stream he crosses is but two boards in the floor, the cavern, the space under the table, and the forest the rows of seats? This make believe world is very real and the make believe power is a magical power. To this active realization of the story the old ballad is well adapted. It is full of the dramatic—of action, of suggested action, and dialogue. The ballad characters speak out boldly and vigorously. There is much of plain talk, but no talk merely for the talk’s sake. It always starts the action or comes as a result of the action. The boy who in play chases the red deer through the cool shadows of Sherwood Forest, or with Adam Bell and his yeoman comrades makes a strong-hearted defense, lives a larger life and has entrance into a larger world.

It is worth much to have these fragments of literature as a possession in one’s memory. In our study of literature we do not do enough of getting by heart. Committing a poem to memory is one way of getting it by heart in a truer sense—of making it a part of one’s self. Since these ballads came down through oral transmission, they seem made for this very end. After reading a ballad once, it is easy to repeat snatches of it and one likes to repeat the snatches if only for the lilt and swing of the lines. For the boy or girl this means the whole poem learned without

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half trying. And it will make a joy in memory and become for the man or woman 'a liberalizing power.'

For another reason is this ballad literature educative. These fragments of poetry have remained, floating about through the centuries until caught by printers' ink, because they have a place in what is called literature. The world finds a joy in its rills of song as well as in its mighty rivers. The test of literature is the same as the test we apply to men, the test of Carlyle for his heroes—sincerity. Elemental as these ballads are, they are real literature, for they ring true—and they have been tested by the centuries. It is their character of sincerity, aside from their subject-matter and their form, that makes them wholesome literature for childhood. And when the child becomes a man, he may still delight in them, for real literature has perennial interest.

One objects that they are all for boys and that they are in English too difficult for children to understand. True, they seem to tell more of the hero than of the heroine; but so do the old Greek myths, so does "Hiawatha," so does the story of "Siegfried." "William Tell" is a tale for boys rather than girls, yet girls delight in it. The free, bold life of the ballads has its attractiveness for girls; in our schoolrooms we have seen them as eager in the adventures of Robin Hood as the boys. Does the older reader ask himself if it is a man's story or a woman's that he is reading? And is he willing to read only the kind that especially concerns his interest? The child's horizon should be enlarged by his reading. In our time, when women are entering more and more into the larger activities of the world, the literature for the girl may well be the same as the literature for the boy. For her, too, there will be conflicts and mysteries which will require all the courage that may be stimulated through heroic story. And then—real literature is universal in its appeal, for men and women as well as for races.

The language is old, but not more difficult than the language of the familiar poems of Burns, and the glossaries in the school editions of the ballads readily make clear the meanings of the old words. There are many versions of these ballads, ranging

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from those that are mainly in the old diction to those that have an old word only here and there; but the charm of the poetry is partly lost in the very modern versions. Children of the third grade enjoy hearing the story of Robin Hood told to them in the quaint English of Howard Pyle's retelling of the story. In their reproduction they seem naturally and easily to use the quaint words, and the story has more of interest and beauty for the quaint phrasing. The diction of the half modernized versions of the ballads is hardly beyond the child of the fourth and fifth grades. It is hearty English he is reading; and the English language will have more to him of life, of history, and poetry for his meeting with these older forms of the language in the stories he enjoys.

A more serious objection is that many of the ballads tell of experiences that are beyond the pupil of the grades, that are too sadly human for his mind to know even through literature. The school collections are selected mainly with reference to pupils older than those in the grades. A teacher must needs be wise in her selection of the ballads to be read; she must almost make her own ballad book. It is to be hoped that among the editions of ballad books for school use now being published, some one will be found adapted to the pupils of the fourth and fifth grades. Lanier's "The Boy's Percy" seems still the boy's ballad book, but even that leaves out some of the best of the Robin Hood ballads and is in its form not adapted to class use. But it and other ballad books should be in the school library and the pupil should be encouraged to read them by himself. He will need no spur if the teacher has a joy in them herself and knows how, by her own reading, to interest him in the tales.

In the romantic past of our history and literature, there is a character that the child should come to know and to love as he loves the poet of "Snow-Bound" or the romancer of Scotland, and it is through these ballads that he may best come to know him. If he learns to love the ballads, he will give his tribute to the old minstrel who kept them as a heritage from the past. It matters little whether we think of him as like Cynewulf, who attributed his power to God, or the rough gleeman of Queen Elizabeth's

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time, who was included with 'rogues, vagabonds. and sturdy beggars,' or that other romantic character that Scott believed in, who united in himself the character of historian, genealogist, poet, and musician, and kept alive the highest heroic ideals of the time. We like to think of him in ruder times, as Saxon and Norse traditions picture him, in the halls of kings and earls, eating of the boar's meat and drinking the foamy mead with the heroes; then when the flickering firelight threw rude shadows on the rafters of the great hall, taking up 'the faery harp that could na' lee,' and singing of the deeds of gods and heroes—stirring battle songs or weird tales of mystery,—to the fierce-eyed warriors about the fire, his voice almost like a voice from another world. The singer has been lost in oblivion but his song remains and places him in a goodly company 'whose music is the gladness of the world.' The child's heart should be the readiest to rejoice in this music and, in his rejoicing, to give praise to its unknown makers and to those who kept for us this rare treasury of song.

SUGGESTED BALLADS.

Chevy Chace.
Sir Patrick Spence.
Adam Bell.
Johnny Armstrong.
King John and the Abbot of Canterbury.
The Battle of Otterburne.
Thomas the Rhymer.
King Lear and His Three Daughters.
The Children in the Wood.
King Estmere.
Sir Cauline.
King Edward the Fourth and the Tanner of Tamworth.
Edom o' Gordon.
Sir Andrew Barton.
The King and the Miller of Mansfield.
Kinmont Willie.
A Little Gest of Robin Hood.
Robin Hood and Little John.

The Northern Illinois State Normal School.

Robin Hood Rescuing the Widow's Three Sons.

Robin Hood and Allin a Dale.

Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne.

Robin Hood and the Curtall Fryer.

Robin Hood and the Monk.

Robin Hood and Queen Katherine.

Robin Hood's Death and Burial.

Johnnie Cock.

The Wee Wee Man.

Tom Thumb.

Katherine Janfarie.

Flodden Field.

BALLAD BOOKS.

The Boy's Percy. Sidney Lanier. (Scribners.)

A Ballad Book. Katherine Lee Bates. (School Edition, Sibley & Co.)

Old English Ballads and Folk Songs. William Dallam Armes. (School Edition, The Macmillan Co.)

Poetry of the People. Gayley and Flaherty. (Ginn & Co.)

A Book of Old English Ballads. Introduction by Hamilton Wright Mabie. (The Macmillan Co.)

The Ballad Book. William Allingham. (The Macmillan Co.)

Old English Ballads. Francis B. Gummere. (Ginn & Co.)

English and Scottish Ballads. Francis James Child. (School Edition, 4 vols. Houghton, Mifflin & Co.)

The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border. Sir Walter Scott. (Adam and Charles Black, Edinburgh.)

Reliques of Ancient English Poetry. Thomas Percy. (George Bell & Sons, London.)

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